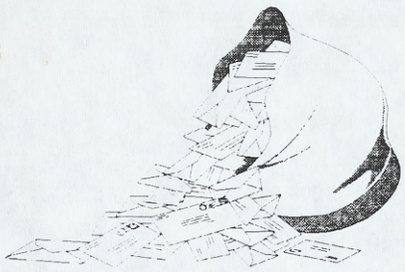

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Lambda Letters Project

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Vol. 5, No. 3 March, 1997 www.humboldt1.com/~mamurphy/lambdaletters LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 965-6851

Site & Date of Annual Meeting Announced

The third annual membership meeting of the Lambda Letters Project is scheduled to occur on Saturday April 19, 1997, at the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, 4641 Marconi Avenue (at Mission) in Sacramento. The meeting will begin at 9:30 A.M. with coffee and donuts, followed by the business meeting at 10. The agenda includes a report on the accomplishments of the Project in 1996, approval of the 1997–98 budget (covering April 1997 through March 1998, see page 7), the election of new board members, and other business that may properly come before the meeting. *Please plan to attend this annual meeting. Help us make Lambda Letters a representative democracy!*

If you are unable to attend, please complete and return the proxy statement enclosed with this newsletter. This is very important because unless we have a quorum of one third of the members present, in person or by proxy, we cannot accomplish the important business of the meeting.

Anyone who is a member in good standing at the time of the annual meeting may vote at the

Continued on page 7

Love Letters

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

—Reinhold Niebuhr, 1926

In a recent conversation with Ray Leber, our treasurer, I expressed my anguish at the loss of two key members of our Board of Directors. Their resignations left us with just eight members on our board.

A few days later Ray sent me a letter which he playfully called a "love letter." He expressed concern for me and the pain I was feeling. It was good to receive that support and concern. However, Ray also suggested I may need to accept the fact that we will never attract the necessary number of board members willing and able to take on significant tasks in support of Lambda Letters. Maybe, he said, we must accept that the Board of Directors will simply be a policy-making body.

Whatever you may think of the religious assumptions of Reinhold Neibuhr's prayer, it makes good sense from a mental health perspective. There's no point in fighting the inevitable. However, several unhappy consequences would result from accepting a small board that simply makes policy. We'd probably have to stop accepting new members, we might need to

Continued on page 6

Also in This Issue:

Combatting Domestic Violence 3, 5
Balancing the Budget on Backs of Others 3
Allowing Same-Sex Couples to Adopt 4
Church Burnings Are Not New 4
Women's Issue Analyst Needed 5
LLP New Budget 7

Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

January, 1997	2,244 letters
In all of 1997	2,244 letters

Dollars Spent

January, 1997	$2,339
In all of 1997	$2,339

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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O'von Pettaway, Sacramento

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Legislative Analyst, Women's Issues: ***Vacant***
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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

Confidentiality

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the Lambda Letters Project Inc.,
6212 Silverton Way, Carmichael, CA 95608.
Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Advertising Rates

Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue, quarter-page ads $20 per issue, half-page ads $30 per issue, full-page ads $50 per issue. Deadline for payment and camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, is the 25th of each month.

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Women's Issue

Helping Combat Domestic Violence

Please write to the Democratic members of the Assembly Public Safety Committee in support of A.B. 45, introduced by Kevin Murray (D–Culver City). A.B. 45 will improve the response to domestic violence in California. Assemblymember Murray's office has asked us to write only to the Democrats on the Committee, so as not to alert those who might oppose this bill.

Current law treats abuse of someone who doesn't live with the abuser (a non-cohabitant) less seriously than abuse of someone with whom the abuser lives (a cohabitant). Abuse of a cohabitant can be punished as either a felony or a misdemeanor. Abuse of a non-cohabitant can only be punished as a misdemeanor. The penalties for misdemeanors are less serious than those for felonies.

In addition, domestic violence protective orders, intended to protect the victims from further violence, are often ignored by the abusers because the bail for violating an order is usually very low, often only $250. As a result, abusers are often back on the street within hours of being arrested for domestic abuse. Worse yet, judges are not required to issue protective orders and often fail to issue them, even in serious criminal cases.

A.B. 45 deals with these problems by:

- Expanding the definition of victims of domestic abuse to cover abuse against non-cohabitants such as a former spouse, a fiancé(e), and people with whom the abuser currently has or has had a dating relationship. This would allow the

Continued on page 5

HIV/AIDS Issue

Balancing the Budget on the Backs of Others

Medicaid is the single largest source of health insurance for people living with AIDS. It provides access to physician visits, hospitalization, prescription drugs, home health care, and long-term care for about 50 percent of adult Californians and 90 percent of children nationwide. To balance the budget, President Clinton is considering "caps" on the amount of Medicaid expenditures spent on each person. These caps would impact the access to life-sustaining health care for thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Recently, the bipartisan National Governors Association and a bipartisan roster of senators joined a chorus of groups opposed to such caps. In addition, during the last year, Medicaid has grown at a lower than expected rate. Capping Medicaid is not necessary at this time. Caps on the amount spent per person would place arbitrary limits on spending that have no relation to the need for health care services. As most per-capita proposals have been conceived, people with HIV/AIDS would be placed in a category along with all other disabled Medicaid beneficiaries. The average cost of treating a disabled Medicaid beneficiary is approximately $8,000 per year. In some communities throughout the nation, average Medicaid costs for treating a person with HIV/AIDS could approach $25,000 per year. This does not even factor in the costs of providing access to protease inhibitors and other cutting-edge medicines that are generating real hope for significantly extending the lives of people living with HIV. Please sign the enclosed letter urging President Clinton to reconsider his plans to put caps on the amount of Medicaid expenditures for each person.

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Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Issue

Allowing Adoptions By Same-Sex Couples

Last year, Governor Wilson proposed regulations that would require social workers to recommend against adoptions by unmarried couples. These regulations, once in effect, would make it more difficult for same-sex couples to adopt. The State Office of Administrative Law is currently processing the new rules, which have not yet been adopted or rejected. Such regulations would make adoptions by same-sex couples difficult but not impossible. The state social worker's recommendations usually carry a great deal of weight in court. However the final decision about an adoption is made by a judge who can choose to override them.

Bill A.B. 53, introduced by Assemblymember Murray, would allow adoption regardless of marital status. A social worker would be prohibited from stating that an adoption is not in the best interests of a child simply because of the marital status of the couple wishing to adopt. It has been introduced specifically to counter the proposed Wilson regulations.

Wilson, by focusing on the "traditional family" as a stable unit, seems to be ignoring the fifty percent divorce rate that married couples now face. In addition, he is ignoring the many committed relationships among gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals in a same-sex relationship who cannot choose to marry. At a time when there is a shortage of adoptive homes in California for any but healthy infants, it seems foolish—not to mention cruel—to further limit the pool of qualified parents. Surely social workers can be trusted to evaluate the stability and appropriateness of a household based on the individual merits of that household.

Because the right of a single person to adopt is protected by law, gays and lesbians may choose to adopt as individuals, rather than as a couple. The result is that the child grows up in the same household, but with only one parent legally obligated to support him or her. It makes no sense for the state to enforce single parenthood when there are two people eager to take on the burden as a couple. Can that be really in the best interests of the child?

People of Color Issue

Church Burnings: Not New

Last summer's rash of church burnings across the country had a clear unmistakable meaning for African Americans. The fires held the symbolism of Ku Klux Klan cross-burnings and were frightfully reminiscent of the racial hatred that led to lynchings of African Americans just a generation ago.

At the close of the previous century, the black community felt a recurring fear that even its most constant sanctuaries were vulnerable to the vagaries of hatred. The shock felt by the black community reverberated throughout the nation among all decent people. Those images of ash-strewn pews and ruined alters left us wondering who could be so vindictive and angry as to torch a temple to the highest motives of mankind. The too-few arrests that followed these fires strongly indicated that they were motivated by racism.

Here in California, Assemblymember Kevin Murray (D–Los Angeles) has introduced two bills that will ensure that persons convicted of arson against a church, temple, synagogue, or any other place of worship will receive penalties and sentences as severe as is appropriate for any aggravated hate crime. A.B. 50 and 51 would change the California Penal Code to send a clear message to the courts: we will not tolerate these cowardly and extremely dangerous assaults on the human spirit. Kevin Murray's office says the bills will be heard, and probably approved, in the Assembly Public Safety Committee in early March. They would then go to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Please write to the member of the Appropriations Committee shown on your sample letter. Ask that these bills be given the highest priority and that they be passed overwhelmingly.

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Women's Issues Analyst Needed

We need a volunteer with good writing skills—and access to a computer and the Internet (desirable, but not required)—to help us prepare our monthly articles and sample letters on women's issues.

Volunteers spend about ten hours each month researching possible subjects and then composing sample letters and articles for our newsletter. They also attend a monthly, one- to two-hour staff meeting in which each month's subjects are chosen. Staff meetings are held in Sacramento, but analysts from other cities join the meeting by conference call. Analysts are also asked to attend quarterly board meetings in Sacramento. The Project can provide a travel allowance to attend these meetings.

The Project can also provide leads on how to find suitable subjects and advice on writing. This is a great opportunity for you (or someone you know) to influence the subjects we cover. If interested, please send us a note with your letters, or call us at (916) 965-6851. You can also e-mail us at LambdaLP@aol.com.

Lavender Valentines

♥

Del and Phyllis 44 years

Let us know when *your* anniversary occurs!

Combatting Domestic Violence

Continued from page 3

judge to treat abuse of these non-cohabitants as a felony.

- Requiring courts to issue protective orders in criminal cases.
- Authorizing judges to set bail for a misdemeanor violation of a domestic violence restraining order at any amount needed to protect the victim and victim's family from further abuse.

Domestic violence occurs out of relationships, not just in living arrangements. Abusive behavior often does not end when a victim leaves an abuser. The additional protections provided by A.B. 45 are sorely needed. Please write to the person on your sample letter expressing your support of A.B. 45.

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Love Letters

Continued from page 1

reduce the services we provide, and we would probably have to close down the Project within three years. Those consequences result from two facts: so much of the work of Lambda Letters is done by me or is dependent on my input, and I have promised myself I will retire at age 62. That will occur in just three years.

Even to carry on the Project at its current level of operation requires a very burdensome level of publicity, fund-raising, volunteer recruitment, and other activities. They are really more than I can continue without significant new help. In most private nonprofit organizations, board members provide important help in all of these activities and more. Each of our current board members provide significant service to the Project. However, there are simply not enough of them. With a minimum of twelve board members, the necessary work could probably be done without undue burden to any of the members, perhaps 10–20 hours per month. But board candidates have not been knocking down our door.

I'd like to hear from you. Do you think that I must simply accept the fact of a small policy-making board with all of its negative consequences? If not, can you join our board or can you persuade other good candidates to do so? I'm hoping you will step forward to help. What we are doing together is too important to let it fail. I will of course be delighted to answer the questions of anyone who needs more information before deciding whether or not to apply for board membership. Send me a love letter. Tell me that you are willing to serve on our board or that you have persuaded another good candidate to do so.

With Love,

Boyce Hinman
Administrator

Silence is the virtue of fools.
— Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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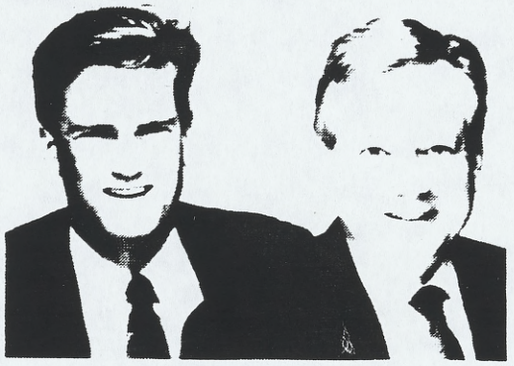

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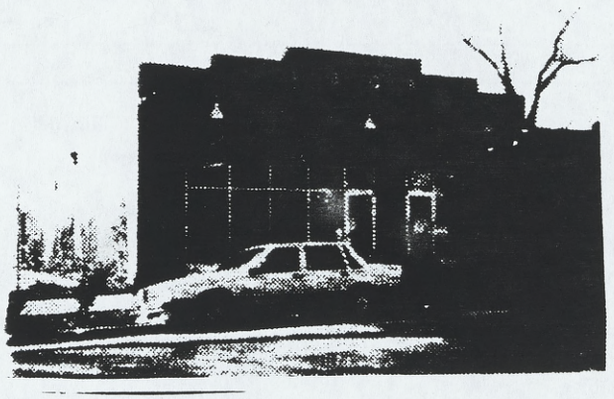

Meeting Site & Date

Continued from page 1

meeting. According to guidelines adopted by the Board of Directors, a member in good standing is anyone who has returned one or more signed letters to Lambda Letters during January, February, or March 1997, who provided a minimum of three hours of volunteer service to the Project during those same months or who made financial contributions to the project during the 12 months prior to the meeting. Under these rules, almost anyone receiving this newsletter qualifies to vote at our annual meeting. We hope you will attend and help make Lambda Letters a member-run organization.

Please remember, we need attendance of one third of our members present, in person or by proxy, to conduct business. So please complete and return your proxy immediately. (Please note: you will be able to vote at the meeting even if you sent us your proxy but then decided to attend the meeting after all.)

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LLP's 1997–98 Budget

The 1997–98 budget will be voted on at the April annual membership meeting. We hope you will be there to discuss it with us, *but please sign and return the enclosed proxy just in case you are unable to attend.* We will be unable to approve a budget unless we have a quorum of one third of the members present in person or by proxy. The tentative budget for the new year is as follows:

Income

Ad Space	$1,920
Calendar Income	956
Carry Forward	818
Contributions	10,516
Entertainment Books	9,880
Total	$24,090

Expenses

Bank Charges	$144
Board Meetings	80
Calendar Expenses	389
E-mail	240
Entertainment Books	8,989
Fees	392
Insurance	1,682
Loan Repayment	670
Photocopies	2,813
Postage	4,128
Sales Tax	63
Space Rental	210
Supplies	1,567
Telephone	314
Travel	1,781
Total	$23,462

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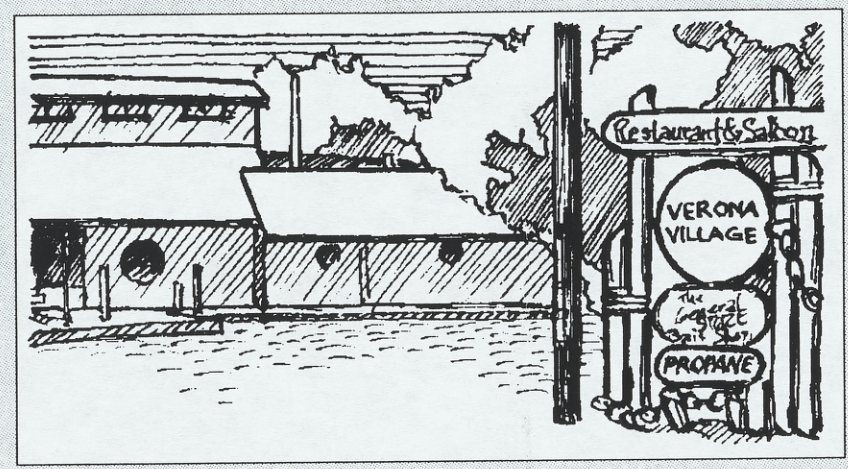

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Contact Terry/Kerry